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ABSTRACT

This study looks at the relationships between a number of personal and social characteristics of a random sample of 254 citizens from the Twin Cities and their satisfaction with a university. Participants were administered a questionnaire, the survey instrument. Results indicated most of the urban citizens had considerable University-related experiences, and they believed that faculty and students are sincere and hardworking. Most were satisfied with different facets of university life, endorsed the broad principle of campus freedom of expression, but were generally opposed to the goals of students when they used more active methods of dissent. Citizens' satisfaction with the university was heavily related to their perception of campus life as it related to the ideological criteria of work ethic and Americanism. A 5-item bibliography is included. (Author/MJM)

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## Abstract

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Most of the urban citizens had considerable University-related experiences, and they believed that faculty and students are sincere and hardworking. Most were satisfied with different facets of University life, endorsed the broad principle of campus freedom of expression, but were generally opposed to the goals of students when they used more active methods of dissent. Citizens' satisfaction with the University was heavily related to their perception of campus life as it related to the ideological criteria of "Work Ethic" and "Americanism".

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# Urban Citizens and their Satisfaction with a University

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How satisfied are citizens with the universities? Through legislative control, the health of universities depends on the answer to this question. Yet, incredibly, no substantial investigations of citizens' satisfaction with universities and colleges have been reported! Some might argue that this lack of research is unimportant because citizens should play a minimal role in the management of higher education. However, citizens are increasingly raising serious questions about these "minimal" definitions of their roles and power in the management of universities and they are asserting more and more influence on colleges and universities. In turn, the responses of universities to this influence are often defensive or inadequate because the institutions lack accurate information about the views of most citizens.

Much of the information we presently have about citizens' satisfaction with higher education is based on more vocal citizens whose representativeness is questionable or on public opinion polls which have no semblance of a theoretical rationale. Often these polls describe a number of one-way relationships between citizens' socio-demographic characteristics and a few indicants of citizens' attitudes.

The need for more information about citizens' attitudes about universities becomes more clear when we consider that universities are social systems in which citizens, students and faculty are constituent subsystems which provide different kinds of input. Universities need to develop means of evaluating input so as to respond properly. A university needs to know the variables which influence the input and upon which it can operate to change that input. For example, indices of citizens' satisfaction with a university are a form of input. However, response to such indices is difficult, since the factors influencing or controlling satisfaction with universities and colleges are not known.

This investigation looks at the multi-variate relationships between a number of personal and social characteristics of urban citizens and their satisfaction with a university. The first question in the study is primarily descriptive. We were interested in urban citizens' attitudes about campus freedom of expression and campus dissent; their beliefs about students, faculty, and administrators; their number and type of university-related experiences; and their level of satisfaction with various facets of the University. The second question in the study has to do with ascertaining those characteristics of urban citizens which could be useful in explaining differences in their levels of satisfaction with the University. While scandals or riots may influence the level of citizen satisfaction with a university, we reasoned that differences in satisfaction were, for the most part, related to four categories of independent variables:

1. Socio-demographic characteristics of citizens: Age, sex, level of education, occupational level, political affiliation, and size of family.
2. Number and kinds of University-related experiences: Attendance at campus concerts, sports events and lectures, being a patient in a University hospital, and attendance at University courses.
3. Relevant social attitudes: Feelings of social alienation, attitudes about campus dissent, and attitudes about campus freedom of expression.
4. Descriptive beliefs about the University: Beliefs about faculty, students, and administrators.

## Method

### Sample

A sample of 413 citizens (heads of households) were randomly selected from the city directories of Minneapolis, St. Paul, and all immediate suburbs except three which contained less than 1% of the total population of the Twin Cities area. Of the original sample, 39 people had moved and left no forwarding address, and

one person was deceased. The final sample included 373 citizens of the Twin Cities metropolitan area. A comparison of the major demographic characteristics of the sample with the 1970 census figures for the Twin Cities metropolitan area revealed a slight under-representation of females and students in the sample.

Questionnaires were completed by 68% (N=254) of the citizens. Most (71%) were males, mean age was 44 years, the range was from 19 years to 82 years. A majority (69%) were married, a few (17%) were single, and the rest were either divorced (6%), widowed (7%), or separated (1%). Some (19%) of the citizens were high school graduates, some (16%) had attended business or trade schools, some (22%) had attended college, and some (20%) were college graduates. About equal percentages of citizens were employed in managerial positions (22%) or as skilled workers (20%), while some (15%) described their occupations as professional, and a few (8%) said they were in sales or in semi-skilled (9%) and unskilled jobs (6%). Very few (5%) were retired and still fewer (1%) were students. The largest percentage of the sample were Democrats (40%); the rest described themselves as either Independents (28%) or Republicans (25%). Size of the families varied from 0 children to 13 children. About 5% had children who graduated from the University of Minnesota, 4% had children who graduated from other colleges, 6% had children attending the University.

Most (67%) of our respondents never attended the University of Minnesota; 28 were graduates of the University; 19 received a bachelor's degree, and seven persons had received advanced degrees. Very few (7%) of the respondents were employed at the University; 11% of them said members of their families were employed at the University, 27% of them had friends and 3% had acquaintances employed at the University.

## Questionnaire

The questionnaire asked about the respondent's background: Age, sex, education, occupation, marital status, political affiliation, and type of educational or work relationship to the University. Respondents also indicated their main sources of information about the University.

They reported the number of times (never, once or twice, a few times, several times, many times) they had each of 12 University-related experiences. These experiences included attendance at campus classes, sports events and lectures; visiting University hospitals; talking to students, faculty and/or staff; campus sightseeing; attendance at off-campus events sponsored by the University, and lectures by University faculty or staff. Alpha (Cronbach, 1951), an internal consistency estimate for the 12 items, was adequate ($\alpha$ =.83).

Respondents completed a measure of general social alienation (Srole, 1956). Internal consistency of this scale was adequate ($\alpha$ =.70). They completed a campus freedom of expression scale (Biggs and Vaughan, 1971: Biggs, Vaughan and Donart, 1971) which contained questions about the freedom of students and faculty to express their opinions and to sponsor controversial lectures on campus. Internal consistency of this scale was adequate ($\alpha$ =.79).

They completed an eight item measure of attitudes about campus dissent (Biggs and Vaughan, 1971: Biggs, Vaughan and Donart, 1971). They reported if they favored or were opposed to the goals and tactics of student activists in different situations. Goals included civil rights and anti-war activities, as well as the provision of birth control information to students. Methods included lectures, sit-ins, meetings, picketing and occupying buildings. Internal consistency of these items was adequate ($\alpha$ =.82).

Respondents reported their general satisfaction with the University, with the conduct of the majority of University students, with the University's handling of cases of student misconduct with the type of education students receive at the University, with the University faculty, with how the University is administered, and with the moral and ethical development of University students. Internal consistency of these items was adequate ($\alpha$ =.84).

Respondents reported whether 25 descriptive beliefs about University life were very true, probably true, undecided, probably false or definitely false. Items dealt with University students, faculty, and administrators as well as University policies.

Statistical Analysis

Multiple regression analyses and chi square were used to observe relationships between experiences, attitudes, beliefs, and background characteristics of citizens and satisfaction with the University. Four categories of independent variables were descriptive beliefs about the University, background characteristics, University-related experiences, and social attitudes. Dummy variables (Suits, 1957) were used in some multiple regression analyses. Dependent variable in each analysis was satisfaction with the University.

## Results

For a large number of people their major source of information about the University was newspapers (43%). Surprisingly, for about 26% of the citizens, students were a major source of information. For some (20%) radio and television were major sources, while for a few, their friends (14%), co-workers (11%) and family (10%) were major sources of information.

Citizen responses to questions about their University-related experiences, beliefs about University life, satisfaction with various aspects of the University, attitudes about campus freedom of expression, and attitudes about campus dissent were the following:

University-Related Experience

Most citizens have considerable University-related experiences but most of these experiences have little to do with the University's teaching functions. Many (55%) have attended plays, concerts and lectures on campus; many (57%) have visited University hospitals (either as a patient or visitor), and many (67%) have visited the campus. As might be expected, almost all (93%) have heard or read news stories or programs about the University, and most (95%) have talked with a University student. Many (65%) also have talked with a University faculty or staff member, most (61%) have heard lectures delivered by a University professor or staff member, and most (61%) have attended sports events on campus.

A majority have never attended University day school classes (83%) or night school classes (75%).. Most (59%) have never attended a high school sports event held on campus; and most (73%) have never attended a University-sponsored play or concert held off campus.

Descriptive Beliefs About the University

The table presents urban citizens' beliefs about faculty and students.

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Insert the table here

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While most urban citizens had positive general beliefs about the faculty's being sincere and hardworking, they varied considerably in some of their beliefs about professors. For example, in six out of seven cases almost as many citizens believed that certain things were true about professors as there were citizens who were undecided or believed the same things were false.

A majority of citizens believed that most University students were sincere and hardworking, most students had to work in order to attend school, athletes received special scholarships and that most students were concerned with social and political action. A majority of citizens did not believe that University students were more intelligent than those attending state or junior colleges, most students were regular users of marijuana, most students were from upper income families and that most students would earn over $10,000 the first year after graduation. Citizens were not quite as sure about some other beliefs about students, such as, whether students attended religious services regularly, if students were mostly liberals, or if black students had a great deal of influence on the University administration.

Citizens have varied opinions about such campus matters as whether subversive activities were going on at the University, whether University courses were practical and relevant, whether the University ignores the needs of citizens, and whether the State Legislature has considerable power in determining University policies.

However, most citizens did not think that increases in state taxes have gone to support the University.

Satisfaction with the University

A majority (69%) of the citizens were satisfied or more than satisfied with the University as a whole. Most were satisfied or more than satisfied with the way the majority of students conduct themselves (81%), and with the type of education students receive at the University (77%). Many were satisfied or more than satisfied with the faculty (67%), the administration (60%), and student morality (60%). Finally, it should be of more than passing interest that only slightly less than half (47%) of the citizens were satisfied or more than satisfied with the way in which cases of student misconduct were being handled.

Attitudes about Campus Freedom of Expression

A majority (66%) of citizens agreed with the broad principle that the University should be a place where the widest variety of political viewpoints were expressed and where none has official University endorsement. A considerable number (49%) also thought that individuals, even if they hold viewpoints unacceptable to most citizens, should be allowed to speak on campus. However, citizens' attitudes about campus freedom of expression depended on the issues. Half (53%) would fire a history professor if he were a member of the Communist Party, and less than half (47%) though homosexual student groups should be allowed to hold peaceful public meetings on campus. Over half (59%) thought Mohammed Ali should be allowed to speak on campus about his Black Muslim convictions but most (75%) were strongly opposed to granting official recognition to a campus chapter of Ku Klux Klan.

Attitudes about Campus Dissent

Citizens become increasingly opposed to the goals of students when they use more active methods of dissent. Support for civil rights activities was strongest

when students held meetings (71%): support for these same goals noticeably decreased when students had a sit-in (55%), or occupied a building (51%).

Citizen support for goals of student activists also varied even when they used similar methods. Only 26% supported students (holding a sit-in) who were opposed to Army recruiters using campus facilities, while 55% supported students (holding a sit-in) who were opposed to a University policy which discriminated against Blacks, and 56% supported students (holding a sit-in) who thought the University should provide birth control information.

A majority of citizens supported the goals of anti-Viet Nam war activists even when they were opposed to methods. Most (69%) were in favor of students opposed to the war holding lectures, many (66%) supported such goals even when students occupied buildings and destroyed property, and many (58%) supported these goals even when students picketed and tried to persuade other students to stay out of classes.

Characteristics of Citizens and their Satisfaction with the University

Attendance at the University, employment at the University, sex, number of children, age, level of education, and occupational level were nearly unrelated to citizens' satisfaction with the University (R=.15). The variance in these socio-economic characteristics of urban citizens accounted for only 2% of the variance in their level of satisfaction with the University. However, we found no significant differences in the level of satisfaction between Democrats, Independents and Republicans ($K^2 = 4.00$; $P \leq .50$).

Urban citizens' number of University-related experiences was not significantly related to their satisfaction with the University (R = .19). The number of University-related experiences of citizens accounted for only 3% of the variance in their satisfaction with the University.

Feelings of alienation, attitudes about campus dissent and attitudes about campus freedom of expression were somewhat related to urban citizen satisfaction

with the University (R=.31). These attitudes accounted for a very small percentage (9%) of the variance in satisfaction. Attitudes about campus freedom of expression accounted for 5% of the variance, attitudes about campus dissent accounted for 2%, and feelings of alienation accounted for 2%.

Urban citizens' descriptive beliefs about University life were heavily related to their satisfaction with the University (R=.73). These beliefs accounted for (53%) of the variance in satisfaction. The cognitive basis for some of the differences in urban citizens' satisfaction with the University can be inferred by examining those beliefs about university life most related to satisfaction. Differences among citizens as to whether they believed professors were sincere and hardworking made the largest relative contribution (17% of the variance) to explaining differences in their satisfaction with the University. The more citizens believed professors were sincere and hardworking, the more apt they were to be satisfied with the University. Differences among citizens as to whether they believed many subversive activities were going on at the University (9% of the variance), and whether they believed students were sincere and hard working (5% of the variance) were also related to differences in their satisfaction with the University. The more citizens believed that many subversive activities were not going on at the University and that most students were sincere and hard working, the more apt they were to be satisfied with the University.

We trichotomized the citizens by their total score on the satisfaction scale into the lowest 20%, the middle 60%, and the top 20%. Although most citizens (79%) thought professors were sincere and hard working, we found striking differences between the most satisfied and least satisfied citizens' beliefs about this matter. About 98% of the most satisfied citizens believed the statement was true while only 53% of the least satisfied citizens thought it was true. About 38% of the least satisfied were undecided, and only 2% of the most satisfied citizens were undecided. Urban citizens who were least satisfied with the University more often believed that militant student radicals had considerable power at the University ($\chi^2$=40.58; P .01),

[illegible] activities were going on at the University ($X^2$=36.38; P≤.01), professors tried to influence political and social viewpoints of students ($X^2$=33.37; P≤.01), many courses at the University had little or no relationship to the real world ($X^2$=29.62; P≤.01), increases in state taxes had gone to support the University ($X^2$=18.36; P≤.01), professors spend little time teaching ($X^2$14.14; P≤.01), the University was mainly concerned with graduate education ($X^2$=12.88; P≤.05), and faculty spent a great deal of time doing research and consulting ($X^2$=10.79; P≤.05).

## Discussion and Conclusion

Urban citizens were not found to be isolated from University life. However, most of their University-related experiences could not be considered strictly instructional. These experiences were, for the most part, recreational, informal and interpersonal. The University is obviously a social institution which provides far more than formal instruction or research services for most of the community.

Urban citizens differed considerably in their beliefs about professors which suggests they may be either somewhat isolated from professors or they may receive conflicting information about the work of professors. Among these urban citizens the role of the professor does not seem to be very clearly defined. However, since professors represent such a heterogeneous group of people, this is not surprising. There are wide differences in the duties of the professors in different disciplines. Questions for future research are whether urban citizens' beliefs about professors are differentiated by disciplines. Is there a generalized perceived role for professors? What are citizens' stereotypes about professors?

Most citizens were satisfied with most facets of University life. However, a surprisingly large percentage of them (34%) were dissatisfied with the way the University handles cases of student misconduct. Since most citizens probably don't have very accurate information about the University's methods of handling cases of student misconduct, it is altogether possible that they may be reacting to a few highly publicized incidents. However, it is also possible that citizens expect the

University to handle cases of student misconduct differently from what they are presently being handled. For some time, the question of how to handle cases of student misconduct has been debated among students, staff and faculty on the campus. Citizens' views should be brought into this discussion because before much progress can be made in the implementation of an effective student conduct code, more citizens must understand the issues, present policies, and possible new policies.

Urban citizens differed considerably in their views about campus freedom of expression. Although most agreed with the general principle of freedom of expression, many would limit freedom in specific cases. Urban citizens' attitudes about campus dissent were influenced by both the goals and methods used by activists. Citizens were most in favor of students holding meetings to express their dissent. However, a surprising number of citizens would support anti-Viet Nam war activities when students occupied buildings or picketed.

A very important finding in this study was that urban citizens' satisfaction with the University was very much related to their beliefs about university life. The profile of beliefs associated with satisfaction should be very useful because they suggest content for a positive public relations program. These same findings also suggest that the "common folk" diagnoses of citizens' dissatisfactions with the University may have little validity. Citizens seemingly were not dissatisfied with the University because of their socio-economic background, because of their lack of university-related experiences, because they were alienated, or because they have conservative attitudes about campus freedom of expression or campus dissent. Citizens who were most dissatisfied with the University differed from those who were most satisfied in their interpretations of university life. The belief correlates found to be associated with satisfaction with the University suggest that urban citizens may use two ideological criteria, the "Work Ethic" and "Americanism," when they make judgments about the University.

November 15, 1972

TABLE

Urban Citizens' Beliefs about a University

| Beliefs | Very or Probably true | Undecided | Probably or definitely false |
|---|---|---|---|
| Most U of M students are generally serious and hard working. | 88% | 10% | 2% |
| Most U of M professors are sincere and hard working. | 79% | 19% | 2% |
| U of M athletes often receive special scholarships. | 70% | 20% | 9% |
| Most U of M students have to work in order to attend school. | 61% | 28% | 11% |
| Most U of M students are concerned with social and political action. | 60% | 28% | 12% |
| Most U of M professors spend a great deal of time doing research and consulting. | 52% | 35% | 13% |
| Most U of M students are liberals. | 47% | 40% | 13% |
| The State Legislature has considerable power in determining what policies the University will follow. | 42% | 26% | 31% |
| Most U of M professors are liberals. | 36% | 49% | 15% |
| Black students attending the U of M have a great deal of influence on the University administration. | 32% | 35% | 32% |
| Militant student radicals have considerable power at the U of M. | 28% | 28% | 44% |
| Most U of M professors try to influence students' political and social viewpoints. | 27% | 30% | 42% |
| Many courses and programs offered at the U of M have little or no relation to the real world. | 24% | 24% | 53% |

TABLE (Cont.)

Urban Citizens' Beliefs about A University

| Beliefs | Very or Probably true | Undecided | Probably or definitely false |
|---|---|---|---|
| The U of M is mainly concerned with graduate student education. | 22% | 30% | 47% |
| Most U of M professors receive salaries of over $20,000 per year. | 21% | 43% | 36% |
| Many subversive activities are going on at the U of M. | 21% | 39% | 40% |
| Administrators and faculty managing the U of M ignore the needs of many citizens. | 21% | 33% | 47% |
| The U of M athletic program receives a large percentage of the University budget. | 19% | 35% | 46% |
| Most U of M students attend religious services regularly. | 15% | 44% | 41% |
| Most U of M students are more intelligent than students attending state or junior colleges. | 15% | 21% | 64% |
| Most U of M students are from upper income families. | 15% | 20% | 65% |
| Most U of M professors spend little time teaching. | 12% | 28% | 60% |
| Most U of M students will earn over $10,000 the first year after graduation. | 10% | 17% | 72% |
| Most of the increases in state taxes in recent years have gone to support the University. | 9% | 21% | 70% |
| Most U of M students are regular users of marijuana. | 9% | 21% | 70% |

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